

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 MONROV 00407 221741Z

64

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 EB-07

OMB-01 /056 W

----- 126205

R 221612Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4433

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 0407

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, LI

SUBJECT: FINMIN TOLBERT REPORTEDLY TO RESIGN FOR HEALTH REASONS

REF: (A) MONROVIA A-97 OF NOVEMBER 4, 1974; (B) MONROVIA A-4 OF
JANUARY 23, 1975

SUMMARY: RUMOR HEARD FROM SEVERAL SOURCES SAYS FINANCE MINISTER STEPHEN TOLBERT'S RESIGNATION WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL MESSAGE JANUARY 24. REPLACEMENT REPORTEDLY WOULD BE PLANNING MINISTER NEAL. WE'RE SOMEWHAT SKEPTICAL, SINCE WE HEARD SAME RUMOR, WITH SAME DETAILS, LAST YEAR. BUT PRESIDENT IS NOTICEABLY NERVOUS NOW ABOUT WORSENED DOMESTIC SITUATION. PARTY CHIEFTAINS, SO RUMOR GOES, HAVE TOLD HIM HE CAN BE RE-ELECTED BUT WITH STRING ATTACHED THAT STEVE GO. IN ANY CASE, PRESIDENT WOULD LIKE TO REDUCE COMPLAINTS AS COMING ELECTION CAMPAIGN OPENS. SUPREME COURT CHIEF JUSTICE PEIRRE, STEVE'S FATHER-IN-LAW, MAY ALSO BE GOING. END SUMMARY.

1. LOCAL SWISSAIR REP, WHO IS WELL PLUGGED INTO LOCAL POWER STRUCTURE, YESTERDAY TOLD EMBASSY OFFICER FOLLOWING: FINANCE MINISTER STEPHEN TOLBERT IS EN ROUTE TO US (OR DEPARTURE IS AT LEAST IMMINENT) OSTENSIBLY FOR MEDICAL CHECKUP. STEVE WILL SEND TELEGRAM TO PRESIDENT TO ARRIVE THURSDAY SAYING THAT HEALTH WILL NOT PERMIT HIS CONTINUING IN OFFICE. PRESIDENT WILL ANNOUNCE IN HIS ANNUAL MESSAGE FRIDAY, JANUARY 24, STEVE'S
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 MONROV 00407 221741Z

RESIGNATION AND REPLACEMENT BY MINISTER (OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC

AFFAIRS) NEAL.

2. OTHER IMMINENT CHANGES REPORTED ALSO BY SWISSAIR REP INCLUDE RETIREMENT FOR AGE OF CHIEF JUSTICE PIERRE, PIERRE'S REPLACEMENT BY "JUDGE" MORGAN (WE ARE UNABLE TO IDENTIFY THIS MAN, PROBABLY REFERENCE IS TO MINISTER OF JUSTICE LAWRENCEHMORGAN), AND NAMING OF FORMER MINISTER OF JUSTICE CLARENCE SIMPSON, JR., TO HEAD UP "FORESTRY DEPARTMENT" (PRESUMABLY NEW MINISTRY OF FORESTRY AND LANDS WE'VE HEARD RUMORS ABOUT-- MONROVIA A-97). SWISSAIR REP WAS NOT SURE THESE CHANGES WOULD BE ANNOUNCED IN PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

3. SWISSAIR REP DECLINED TO IDENTIFY HIS SOURCE BEYOND SAYING HE IS "IN THE PRESS" AND THAT THIS INFO WAS NOT PASSED ON AS A RUMOR, BUT AS "THINGS THAT WILL HAPPEN."

4. SUBSEQUENT TO RECEIPT OF FOREGOING INFORMATION, LEE DETWILER, AN AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN WITH LISCO, IN RESPONSE TO EMBASSY OFFICER'S QUERY ABOUT MATTER, ASSERTED VIEW THAT "STEVE WILL GO" (AND WAS WILLING TO BET ON IT AT 5 TO 1 ODDS). HIS UNDERSTANDING IS THAT PARTY CHIEFTAINS HAVE ASSURED PRESIDENT HE CAN BE RE-ELECTED, BUT THAT THERE ARE STRINGS ATTACHED. ONE OF THESE (OTHERS NOT SPECIFIED) IS DEPARTURE OF STEVE. ASKED WHY STEVE'S REMOVAL IS NECESSARY, SOURCE CITED TWO REASONS: PORTE AFFAIR AND LAST YEAR'S "ISRAELI BANKING FIASCO" (DETAILS OF WHICH NOT FULLY KNOWN TO EMBASSY), IN WHICH BOTH TOLBERTS AND GOL ALLEGEDLY LOST A LOT OF MONEY. AS TO STEVE'S WHEREABOUTS, SOURCE SAID THAT HE DOESN'T KNOW WHERE STEVE IS, BUT ADDED THAT HE USUALLY DOES KNOW.

5. SUBSTANTIALLY SAME INFO RE STEVE HAS NOW COME TO US THROUGH A MILITARY SOURCE.

6. COMMENTS

A. SOME SKEPTICISM RE FOREGOING ABOUT STEVE SEEMS JUSTIFIED. WE HEARD SAME REPORT LAST YEAR, WITH PRECISELY SAME DETAILS (HEALTH CHECKUP VISIT, TELEGRAM TO PRESIDENT, ANNOUNCEMENT OF STEVE'S RESIGNATION IN ANNUAL MESSAGE, REPLACEMENT BY NEAL, FROM "RELIABLE" PRESS SOURCE). ON OTHER HAND, REPORT IS FAR MORE WIDESPREAD NOW. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT STEVE HAS IN PAST CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 MONROV 00407 221741Z

YEAR BECOME A MUCH MORE SERIOUS BURDEN ON PRESIDENT TOLBERT'S IMAGE, MAINLY THROUGH PORTE AFFAIR AND ACTIVITIES IT HAS BROUGHT TO LIGHT. STEVE HAS REPEATEDLY SAID HE'D LIKE TO STEP DOWN. MOREOVER, PRESIDENT TOLBERT IS OBVIOUSLY MORE NERVOUS ABOUT DOMESTIC SITUATION NOW THAN HE WAS LAST YEAR (MONROVIA A-4). AND THERE IS ALWAYS FACT OF COMING ELECTION PERIOD, FOR WHICH EVEN IN LIBERIA, WITH ITS ONE-PARTY, SURE-WINNER SYSTEM, PRESIDENT WANTS TO REDUCE GROUNDS FOR COMPLAINT ABOUT HIS

STEWARSHIP AND SHOW HE IS DEALING WITH THEM.
B. SO FAR AS RETIREMENT OF CHIEF JUSTICE PIERRE IS CON-
CERNED, IT DOES SEEM POSSIBLE THAT PRESIDENT MIGHT WANT TO
SEE HIM GO. PIERRE IS CORDIALLY DISLIKED BY MANY OF THE ELITE.
AND SOME OF HIS COLLEAGUES IN COURT ARE NOT ON SPEAKING TERMS
WITH HIM. CITATION OF STUDENT EDITORS OF "REVELATION" FOR
CONTEMPT IN PORTE CASE (MONROVIA A-4) WAS REPORTEDLY PIERRE'S
DOING, NOT THAT OF COURT TO WHICH CONTEMPT WAS PURPORTEDLY
SHOWN AND NOT THAT OF SUPREME COURT EN BANC. FACT THAT PIERRE
IS STEVE'S FATHER-IN-LAW HAS CAUSED CERTAIN AMOUNT OF EYEBROW
RAISING ABOUT THESE CITATIONS.

C. ONLY LAST WEEK, IN EARSHOT OF EMBASSY OFFICER, CLARENCE
SIMPSON SAID THAT NEW MINISTRY OF FORESTRY AND LANDS HAD BEEN
OFFERED HIM BUT THAT HE HAD TURNED IT DOWN. HE SAID HE'S BEEN
FIFTEEN YEARS IN GOVERNMENT AND WAS GLAD TO BE OUT OF IT.
THESE STATEMENTS EMBASSY TAKES WITH CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF SALT,
HOWEVER; SIMPSON COULD BE EXPECTED TO BE PARTICULARLY EVASIVE
IF HE KNEW PRESIDENT WOULD OR MIGHT ANNOUNCE THE NEW MINISTRY
AND MINISTER IN HIS ANNUAL MESSAGE.

MANFULL

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HEALTH, ALLEGATIONS, PERSONNEL RESIGNATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 JAN 1975
Decapton Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decapton Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GarlanWA
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975MONROV00407
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750024-0823
From: MONROVIA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750130/aaaabapb.tel
Line Count: 136
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 MONROVIA A-97, 75 OF NOVEMBER 4, 75 1974, 75 MONROVIA A-4
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GarlanWA
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22 AUG 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <22 AUG 2003 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <22 AUG 2003 by GarlanWA>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FINMIN TOLBERT REPORTEDLY TO RESIGN FOR HEALTH REASONS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, LI, FR, (TOLBERT, STEPHEN)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006